1991 ஜூலை 8]

(* 22ஆம் பக்கத்திலுள்ள அடிக் குறிப்பை காண்க)

Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

It indeed gives me great pleasure to address the first session of the newly constituted Legislative Assembly of the State and to extend my felicitations and to welcome you all, the Members of this august Assembly, who have assembled here having been elected by the people in the recent elections. I must express my grateful thanks to the people of Tamil Nadu, who turned out in large numbers to exercise their franchise, and thus displayed a keen sense of responsibility and faith in the democratic process.

2. I have full confidence, that, though many of you may have been elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time, you will fulfil your duties, with devotion and dignity imbued with the highest principles of democracy. You will agree, that our people in electing an unprecedented large number of women legislators to this Assembly, have demonstrated the progressive thoughts of our society.

3. In these elections, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and its allied front have won a resounding victory in all but 8 constituencies. This spectacular triumph is unprecedented in the history of the Indian Republic. These elections demonstrate the unshakable faith of the people of Tamil Nadu in the AIADMK and its leader, the Honourable Chief Minister. This great verdict of the people is a measure of justice for the several indignities of a political nature, heaped upon the Honourable Chief Minister in the past. I extend my very best wishes and congratulations to Selvi J. Jayalalitha, who is the first elected woman Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

4. It is with a heavy heart that I recall the cold blooded and brutal assassination by evil minded persons on 21st May of Thiru Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India in Tamil Nadu, which was always regarded as a " garden of peace ". Our country lost a world renowned leader, mainly due to the " gun culture " which got systematically promoted in Tamil Nadu during the last few years. I wish to offer my homage to the memory of the departed leader in this Assembly. This Government will take immediate steps to establish a fitting memorial at the site where he was assassinated.

5. When foreign militants and extremists are trying to convert Tamil Nadu into a theatre of violence, disrupting the lives of our people, by creating undesirable law and order situations, this Government which has assumed office with the massive mandate of the people will strive to fulfil its responsibility with the full co-operation and support of the people of Tamil Nadu to restore law and order and ensure peace and tranquillity so that the people can live without any fear. All necessary steps in furtherance of this objective a being taken.

6. The prime duty of the Government which has just assumed office, is to fulfil the assurances given to the people and provide a corruption-free, honest and just administration which will be a model for all the other States in the Indian sub-continent.

7. India has an ancient civilization. In its culture, history and various other fields, we cannot but discern a clear sense of oneness. Therefore, my Government is of the firm belief that this country will progress only if this feeling of oneness is respected, divisive forces are opposed and the same sense of oneness further strengthened. This Government shall extend its fullest support and co-operation to the Centre which is committed to fulfil the policy of promoting economic development, social justice and in bringing about a peaceful atmosphere. At the same time, the principle that the progress of the Indian Nation depends upon the development of the constituent States is basic to our Government. Following the path of Perarignar Anna, as spelt out by Dr. M. G. Ramachandran, our aim shall be " neither dependence, nor independence but inter-dependence ".

8. My Government will continue to implement the two language policy of Tamil and English formulated and implemented by Perarignar Anna. Steps will be taken for the increased use of Tamil in the State administration. My Government will vigorously formulate and implement schemes for the development of the Tamil language.

9. My Government has ordered immediately on assuming the reins of office, the closure of all cheap liquor shops, thus fulfilling the assurance given to the people to wipe out the woes of many-a-mother and brighten lakhs of homes in Tamil Nadu. Total prohibition is the policy of this Government. Liquor has wrought havoc in the lives of the poor people of our State. It is with the intention of saving the people from ruin that this Government has decided to close down the cheap liquor shops even though the loss of revenue will be substantial. In addition to closing the cheap liquor shops, the Government will be taking stern action against the persons engaging themselves in the manufacture or sale of illicit liquor. A high level committee will be constituted to draw up schemes to explain to the people the benefits of prohibition and to monitor the various steps taken to free the people from the evils of drink. This will be implemented vigorously.

10. Apart from extending full co-operation to the Centre, in the steps it takes for protecting the poor and the middle class from the effects of price rise, my Government will fully utilize the Public Distribution System to control prices. The Public Distribution System will be reorganised in such a way that the essential commodities reach the people in the quantities prescribed. All efforts will be taken for removing the defects now found in the system.

11. This Government will implement schemes in the Agriculture sector, which is the backbone of our State's economy, so as to improve production and productivity, and thus enabling the farmers to derive greater benefits. As the surface water resources have been mostly tapped, the Government will encourage schemes for the economic use of water resources for agriculture. Funds will be allocated for organising training programmes in water management. Suitable administrative measures will be evolved for bringing into cultivation the waste and fallow lands. The tanks and ponds throughout Tamil Nadu are maintained poorly and are not being put to optimum use. The administrative machinery is being geared up to renovate the tanks and ponds to ensure assured irrigation facilities.

12. Members of this House are aware of the interim order of the Tribunal constituted to go into the Cauvery water dispute. Although this order provides for an assured supply, the interim order does not give us full satisfaction as the quantities allocated are inadequate in relation to our needs. I would like to stress that my Government will continue to take all necessary steps before the Tribunal to get the required full quantity of water for the Cauvery delta areas.

13. On this occasion, I take pleasure in informing the House that the Government is actively considering the question of extending debt relief to farmers as outlined in the election manifesto.

14. During Dr. M. G. Ramachandran's administration, milk producers got an additional price in the lean seasion along with the basic procurement price. This policy was given up in the last two years and only a uniform price was extended. We shall adhere from the current year to the earlier policy of giving additional price in the lean season.

15. As part of land reforms, in keeping with the policy of "land to the tiller", a Bill to take over surplus benami lands and to distribute them to the landless poor was passed by this House, during Dr. M. G Ramachandran's administration. Due to several reasons, this measure was not brought into force. This Government will take immediate steps to introduce fresh legislation to provide for the take over of benami lands and distribution of these lands to the landless poor.

16. Although various schemes have been implemented for the past 40 years for rural development, a situation where even basic services are not available in rural areas continues. Basic infrastructural and other facilities like roads, drinking water supply, street lights, health services are not adequate. The existing services are not maintained properly. A new "Special Self-Sufficiency Scheme" will be launched immediately to provide these basic facilities in the rural areas. Under this scheme costing Rs. 384 crores, this Government will provide Rupees one Crore to each Panchayat Union.

17. This Government will take necessary action to increase the powers of Panchayats and Panchayat Unions. The Government will take steps to improve the resources of local bodies to enable them to implement their programmes. Elections to the Corporations, Municipalities, Panchayats and Panchayat Unions will be held early.

18. It will be an important endeavour of my Government to provide all basic facilities to promote industries in Tamil Nadu on a substantial scale, to stimulate the industrial sector, to increase employment opportunities for lakhs of technically qalified young people and thus to secure impressive progress in the economic development of our State. This Government will pay particular attention to the provision of sufficient incentives to entrepreneurs to start industries and to remove hurdles in the rules and regulations which stand in the way of industrial progress. The Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation engaged in the promotion of Joint Sector ventures will provide necessary facilities and incentives for this purpose. A new thrust will be given to industrial development by improving the working of the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu. It is our aim and objectivetto reinvigorate industrial development in Tamil Nadu and transform our State into the first among the industrially developed State of India.

19. Tamil Nadu is not gifted with abundant natural resources Central investment is, therefore, essential for the industrial development of the State. The share of the Centre's investment in Tamil Nadu as a percentage of the total investment in the country has come down from 8 per cent to 5 per cent. My Government will urge the Centre to implement speedily the National Aromatics Project (NAPCO) and the project to bring natural gas to Tamil Nadu by forming the Southern gas grid.

20. My Government will give the highest priority to power generation which is very essential for industrial development. Steps will be taken to promote new power plants in the private sector. While efforts will continue to develop conventional energy sources, my Government will take special steps to promote the use of solar thermal energy, solar photovoltaic energy, ocean thermal energy and wind energy for power generation.

21. The major share of electricity generated in Tamil Nadu comes to us from thermal power plants. Coal is essential for the thermal projects. We have to bring coal from other States in view of the non-availability of coal in Tamil Nadu. The generation in thermal power project is affected by the various bottlenecks involved in the transportation of coal. Recently, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu discussed this issue with the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, who gave an assurance that immediate steps will be taken to despatch one lakh tonnes of coal for the thermal plants in Tamil Nadu. He has also assured that coal will continue to be supplied on a regualr basis from Singareni Collieries after September 1991. I am sure Members of this House will welcome this.

22. "Health for all" shall be the goal of this Government. To reach this goal, we shall, besides increasing the number of hospitals and primary health centres, take steps to ensure the supply of necessary medicines and improve the service rendered by doctors. In addition to improving the rural health services, steps will be taken to install modern medical facilities in District Headquarters Hospitals and Medical College Hospitals. The Government will pay special attention to the needs of pregnant and nursing mothers. Action programmes will be drawn up and implemented for this purpose immediately. The existing departments will be reorganised to provide for an integrated approach in providing health services to benefit people in rural areas.

23. Always having the welfare of the Backward Classes as an important objective. Dr.M.G. Ramachandran's Government increased the reservation for Backward Classes to 50 per cent making it the highest percentage of reservation in India for the Backward Classes. At the time when the recommendations of the Mandal Commission are to be implemented. this Government will urge that 50 per cent reservation for Backward Classes should be implemented by the Centre as a policy and this reservation should apply to employment in all departments and in admissions to educational institutions.

24. Although many measures have been initiated for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they continue to live in abject poverty as proper policies for their economic improvement have not been implemented. This Government will strive for their uplift from poverty and secure for them equal status in society. Action programmes to achieve this objective will be drawn up and implemented.

25. This Government will take all steps to secure equal opportunities for women who constitute half of our society. Education facilities and employment opportunities will be extended to women so that they will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to become self sufficient. The Government will appoint only women teachers upto standard-V in all primary schools. Steps will be taken to increase the employment of women teachers in middle schools and high schools.

26. Imbued by a vision of a healthy and strong new generation, the Nutritious Noon Meal Programme was implemented by Dr. M. G. Ramachandran's Government to benefit children belonging to poor families going without even a single meal a day. However, the basic objectives were not fulfilled owing to the changes effected during the period after his demise. The programme will be reorganised to ensure that its basic objectives are realised and all short comings removed. A High Power Committee will be constituted to oversee the implementation of this programme. Keeping in mind the requirements of the children, the provision of edible oil, pulses and other itmes will be increased.

27. Under the family security fund scheme an amount of Rs. 40,000 is presently extended to the family of a Government employee who dies in service. This Government has decided to increase the benefit amount to Rs. 60,000.

28. For the proper maintenance and administration of our renowned temples, a new Temple Administration Board will be established. The Board will look after the needs of these temples and take appropriate steps to renovate and ensure maintenance and observance of worship rituals in the temples.

29. Complaints have been received regarding the irregularities in the conduct of elections to the Co-operative Societies held during last year and malpractices in the nomination of members, resulting in the degradation of the entire co-operative movement. To eradicate these deficiencies, it has been decided to bring in suitable legislation.

30. This Government has assumed office at a difficult time when the State is in the grip of a severe financial crisis. The discontinuance of the sale of country liquor will entail a further loss of revenue of Rs. 322 crores. Additional resources are needed to implement the special self sufficiency scheme under which each Panchayat Union will be given Rs. 1 crore and several other schemes listed in the election manifesto. In the changed situation we will approach the new Government at the Centre, highlighting the difficult financial situation of our State and take special efforts to secure additional assistance for our State. I am confident that the Centre will give its full support to our State and extend additional financial assistance.

31. This session of the Assembly is for a short duration. The Assembly is to meet for the Budget session following this short session. The people have reposed their total confidence in electing you to this Assembly.

32. The attention of the House has been focussed on some of the policies which indicate the direction the Government will take for the development of the State. We are sure that through a vigorous and efficient implementation of these policies, we shall be able to bring about the overall socio-economic development of the State, benefiting all sections of the society. The deliberations in this House will, no doubt benefit the Government in properly planning and effectively taking steps to accelerate the pace of development in different spheres of life.

33. I convey my best wishes for your success in the challenging tasks ahead. — *Nanri, Vanakkam.*